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STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CRS, SCA/PAB, S/CT, EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND  
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76 POLAD  
REL NATO/ISAF/AS/NZ

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PRT HERAT: NO EVIDENCE OF AFGHAN WOMEN'S BILL OF RIGHTS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: According to "My War at Home", a recently published book by young Afghan-American Masuda Sultan, an "Afghan Women's Bill of Rights" (AWBR) was delivered to the GOA and widely disseminated throughout the country prior to the Constitutional Loya Jirga. Afghan sources and USG and UN personnel stationed in Afghanistan in 2003 have stated, however, they had never heard of an Afghan Women's Bill of Rights. Yet on December 16, 2003, a posting was placed on the Department of State website that highlighted the document. The book may misrepresent both existence and influence of a AWBR, and we caution against any reference to it on the Department website. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) In her book "My War at Home", Afghan-American author, Masuda Sultan describes the crafting, under her guidance and that of an NGO she founded, Women for Afghan Women (WAW), of an Afghan Women's Bill of Rights. Sultan describes how the AWBR was prominently rolled out in a September 2003 press conference following a Kandahar conference where it was developed, presented directly to President Karzai, and widely distributed throughout the country.

¶3. (SBU) Although Sultan claimed the Kandahar conference received favorable coverage in the international press, journalists who covered the conference do not recall any "bill of rights" drafting. A video clip, provided by WAW, was posted on the Department of State website 16 December 2003, three months after the conference. The source for information posted in the international press appears to have come from WAW itself and not from independent journalists.

¶4. (SBU) Knowledgeable Afghans report they are unfamiliar with an AWBR. Former Minister for Women's Affairs Sima Samar - currently head of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and perhaps the most prominent women's rights activist in Afghanistan who was cited in Sultan's book, - told PRToffs she did not know Ms. Sultan nor had she heard of a WAW-drafted Women's Bill of Rights. Samar pointed

out, however, the AIHRC had written at the time, without outside assistance, its own draft constitution and bill of rights in the run up to the Constitutional Loya Jirga. We cannot substantiate Sultan's claim that copies of the AWBR, were widely distributed throughout the country.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: We believe that the claim made by Ms. Sultan in her recently-published book and in the other open source material at the very least highly exaggerated and may misrepresent the drafting and distribution of an "AWBR" in September 2003. Since a Department website was utilized to publicize this in late 2003, we urge the Department exercise caution in referring to Sultan's new book, "My War at Home", or any other assertions by her on WAW in the Department's public diplomacy channels. END COMMENT.  
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